AGENDA ITEM NO. 3

TECHNICAL STAFF REPORT

TO:       City of Laurel Planning Commission
FROM:     Robert Love, Acting Director
CASE:     Variance Application No. 912
          Saint Vincent Pallotti High School
          113 St. Mary’s Place
          Laurel, MD 20707

GENERAL INFORMATION

APPLICANT:   Jeffrey A. Palumbo
              113 St. Mary’s Place
              Laurel, MD 20707

OWNER:       Pallottine Missionary Sisters
              404 8th Street
              Laurel, MD 20707

LOCATION:    113 St. Mary’s Place
              Laurel, MD 20707

ZONE:        R-55 (Single-Family Detached)

REQUESTED ACTION: A Variance to construct a multi-use athletic facility addition and outdoor turf field by seeking a reduction of the green area required, increase in active recreation area percentage allowed, and reduction in setback requirement along the 9th Street side.

PREVIOUS ACTION:  May 21, 1992: Special Exception No. 546 for expanded daycare facility approved (Resolution No. 92-05-BOA)
                  February 15, 2001: Special Exception No. 701 for expansion of the high school approved.
BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

The Applicant is seeking a Variance to construct an indoor 36,500 sq. ft. multi use athletic facility addition and a 28,000 sq. ft. outdoor turf field. The Variance is seeking to deviate from the code for the reduction of the green area required, increase in active recreation area percentage allowed, and reduction in setback requirement along the 9th Street side. The current use of the property is Saint Vincent Pallotti High School. The subject property was built in 1959 and has lot area of 289,617 square feet and an existing above-grade building of approximately 59,556 square feet.

THE PROPERTY IS SURROUNDED BY THE FOLLOWING ZONING CLASSIFICATIONS:

- NORTH: R-55, One-Family Detached; R-10, High Density Multi-Family
- EAST: R-55, One-Family Detached
- SOUTH: P-I, Public Institutional
- WEST: R-55, One-Family Detached; R-20, One Family Semi-Detached/Two Family Detached/One Family Triple Attached; R-18, Medium Density Multi-Family; C-N, Commercial Neighborhood

DEPARTMENT/AGENCY RESPONSES:

The following Departments and Agencies were notified of the application and comments were requested. Any responses received are written in the chart below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Department or Agency</th>
<th>Comments Received</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>City of Laurel Department of Public Works</td>
<td>See comments below. (1/27/2021)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City of Laurel Police Department</td>
<td>See comments below. (12/29/2020)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City of Laurel Department of Parks and Recreation</td>
<td>See comments below. (1/13/2021)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>City of Laurel Building Official and Fire Marshal</td>
<td>The roof of the prefabricated building must have a roof live load design of 30 lbs. per local amendment. Many times, out of state fabricators are unaware of this amendment. Secondly handicap parking is not shown. At minimum, one van accessible spot along with an accessible</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Route from the parking spot into the structure is required. (1/8/2021)</td>
<td>No issues with project. (12/29/2020)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Maryland Department of Planning</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

**Department of Public Works Comments:**

- There will be a new driveway entrance on 9th Street across Park Hill Road. This driveway/curb cut must be built to comply with the City’s and County’s standards and provide adequate sight distance when vehicles exiting out from this new driveway. A Right-of-Way permit shall be filed for this work.
- Our Department requests new sidewalks to be constructed on the east side of 9th Street from the new driveway southerly to tie into the existing sidewalk near Montgomery Street. This will provide student a safer walking route if they walk out from the 9th Street entrance.
- If any utility cuts are performed on a City Street, the restoration work must follow the City’s standards that require the permanent patches in the cut area with a 2” mill and overlay from curb-to-curb and a minimum of 25-feet in each direction of the cut. The Applicant is responsible for all the damage within the public right-of-way. The scope of the restoration work will be determined by this Department.
- In the Justification document, it stated that “the new facility will provide additional recreational area for the community ...”. According to the City’s parking schedule, every 4 seats require 1 parking space for the athletic field. The City had received street parking concerns on 9th Street in this area and please address how the parking situation will be handled during the events.
- Currently the DPW collects recycle for the school. If the proposed athletic building and field will require additional services, the Applicant must contact us as soon as possible.
- This plan needs to be sent to Prince George’s County for stormwater management review and approval. A copy of the approved plan or waiver needs to be provided to our Department for documentation.

**Laurel Police Department Comments:**

“Our primary concern with a new venue is traffic safety and parking in the area. We currently field complaints from community members regarding vehicular traffic and parking issues during events and I anticipate this may increase under this plan. I strongly encourage the school to develop a traffic and parking plan within this process so as to most effectively address these issues prior to opening the venue...”

**Laurel Department of Parks and Recreation:**

“As we discussed, Parks and Recreation, while never pleased to give up green space, we are not opposed to the small amount of green space that Pallotti will lose as it will result in additional space for recreational use.

Our bigger concern with the project is with the limited amount of parking for the venue. While I understand that their primary use will be during afterschool hours on the weekdays, where parking may not be quite as problematic, I am very concerned that use during evenings and weekends if the facility is to be used for rental purposes, would have a negative effect on citizens in general and Parks and Recreation operations more specifically.

If the facility is to be used on weeknight and weekend hours, combined with events occurring at McCullough Field, Emancipation Community Park, Sturgis Moore Park and the Municipal Pool, parking would be impacted. There is limited on street parking as it is but adding additional vehicles in the evenings and weekends could be a
strain on the limited resource. There are already parking issues when the Union Hall at the corner of 9th and Montgomery holds meetings. With the renovation of their building to include rental space, more frequent use and additional traffic could be anticipated in that area.

I understand lighting is not part of the current application, however, if thought is given to adding athletic field lighting at any point, I would have concerns given the proximity to the homes and businesses located near the property. While I understand the lighting is positioned to only illuminate the area of play, the additional after business hours use could lead to noise and traffic/parking issues.

In further examination of the outdoor field space, plans show a proposed ball diamond. The concerns are with the potential for balls that could be hit or thrown out of field of play.”

ANALYSIS:

The Applicant is seeking a Variance to construct an indoor 36,500 sq. ft. multi use athletic facility addition and a 28,000 sq. ft. outdoor turf field. The Variance is seeking to deviate from the code for the reduction of the green area required, increase in active recreation area percentage allowed, increase in allowed building coverage, and reduction in setback requirement along the 9th Street side. The property currently has a building coverage of 20.5% of the property. The proposed addition will increase the building coverage to 29.9% which is under the 30% maximum building coverage allowed under Section 20-6.16 of the Unified Land Development Code (ULDC).

Green Area:

Per Section 20-6.16 of the ULDC, a minimum net lot green area for R-55 zoned property of 65% must be maintained. The property currently does not meet the minimum net lot green area standard. The Applicant is proposing the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Required Green Area</th>
<th>Existing Green Area</th>
<th>Proposed Green Area</th>
<th>Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>65% of the property</td>
<td>55.6% of the property</td>
<td>44.7% of the property</td>
<td>20.3%</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Building Setback:

Per Section 20-1.12(j)(2) of the ULDC, private and parochial schools are required to maintain a side and rear building setback of 75 feet from the property line. The applicant will meet this setback with the proposed addition except on the 9th Street side. The applicant is proposing the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Required Setback</th>
<th>Proposed 9th Street Setback</th>
<th>Difference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>75 feet</td>
<td>50 feet</td>
<td>25 feet</td>
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Active Recreation Area:

Per Section 20-1.7 of the ULDC, a green area that includes an active recreational area can comprise not more than ten (10) percent of the total green area. The applicant is proposing the following:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Allowed</th>
<th>Proposed</th>
<th>Difference</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10% of total green area</td>
<td>22% of total green area</td>
<td>12% additional total green area</td>
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</table>
Parking:

The school currently provides 91 parking spaces for the faculty and students. The applicant will be increasing that amount to 95 parking spaces with the relocation of the 9th Street parking lot.

Below is an overhead of Saint Vincent Pallotti High School. The blue arrow illustrates the proposed location of the addition and the red arrow shows the proposed location of the outdoor turf field.

The City of Laurel Board of Appeals is authorized to grant a variance based upon the criteria set forth in Sec. 20-5.0(d) of the Unified Land Division Code.

(1) By reason of exceptional narrowness, shallowness, or shape of specific parcels of property at the time of original enactment of this chapter or amendments thereto or by reason of exceptional topographical conditions or other extra-ordinary situations or conditions of specific parcels of property the strict application of these regulations would result in peculiar or unusual practical difficulties to, or exceptional or undue hardship upon, the owner of such property;

A-1 St. Vincent Pallotti High School is zoned as R55. This zoning places tight restrictions on greenspace. According to Sec.20-6.16 we are required to maintain a minimum of 65% green space. Currently, we have only 55.6% greenspace. With our proposed facility, we will reduce that number to 44.7%. Without a variance for green space requirements, any additional construction is impossible.
A-2. According to the City’s code on Green Space, a recreational facility such as a turf field can only account for 10% of the green space. As mentioned above, our green space is already out of compliance with R55 zoning. Without a variance for the proposed turf field, we would be unable to build a field that is big enough to serve our needs.

B. According to Sec.20-1.12 the minimum setback for Educational facilities is 75ft. Because of the way that 9th street runs along the backside of our property, our current plans only allow for a 50 ft. setback on corner of the facility closest to Park Hill Ave.

(2) Such variance is the minimum reasonable necessary to overcome theforesaid exceptional conditions;

A-1. In order to accommodate the new building as designed and maintain adequate parking, the variance is the minimum reasonably necessary to overcome the green space regulations.

A-2. In order to construct a turf field that provides space for our teams to safely practice, the variance is the minimum reasonable necessary to overcome the aforesaid exceptional conditions regarding use of green space.

B. In order to accommodate the new facility, the variance is the minimal reasonable necessary to overcome the aforesaid exceptional condition regarding the setback at the northwest side of the building.

(3) Such variance can be granted without substantial impairment to the intent, purpose, and integrity of the general plan or any duly adopted and approved area master plan affecting the subject property;

These variances can all be implemented without substantial impairment to the intent, purpose and integrity of the general plan or any duly adopted and approved area master plan affecting the subject property. The end result of these changes to our facility will be consistent with current usage of the property and will enhance the appearance of the property, provide adequate parking for the usage, and create a better traffic flow on and around our campus.

(4) Such variance will not be detrimental to the use and enjoyment of adjoining or neighboring properties. These provisions, however, shall not permit the Board to grant any variance to any setback or yard requirement for property zoned for commercial or industrial purposes when such property abuts or immediately adjoins any property zoned for residential purposes unless such residential property is proposed for commercial or industrial use on an adopted master plan. These provisions shall not be construed to permit the Board, under guise of a variance, to authorize a use of land not otherwise permitted.

1-A. While the construction of the new facility will lower our green space, the new facility will provide additional recreational area for the community and will provide a better result in terms of waste water management. The property affected by the construction is currently an area where it is difficult to keep grass and therefore experiences erosion issues.
1-B. The construction of a turf field will improve the appearance of the property. It will also allow for proper water management to improve the runoff into the watershed. The field will not change the activities that occur on the property as it is currently used for after school athletic practices.

B. The setback variance will bring the building closer to 9th St. but should have little effect on the community. The overall plan will improve the appearance of our property from the 9th street neighborhood and will help alleviate traffic issues by moving our exit to align with Park Hill Rd.

RECOMMENDATION:

Staff recommends that the City of Laurel Planning Commission **RECOMMEND APPROVAL** to the City of Laurel Board of Appeals for Variance Application No. 912, with the following conditions:

1) The Applicant shall obtain all required City of Laurel building permits;
2) The Applicant shall obtain City of Laurel Historic District Commission approval for the project;
3) The Applicant shall obtain a City of Laurel Right-of-Way permit for the installation of the entrance off of 9th Street;
4) The Applicant shall ensure that the driveway/curb cut off of 9th Street is built to comply with the City’s and County’s standards and provide adequate sight distance for vehicles exiting out from the new driveway;
5) The Applicant shall install new sidewalks to be constructed on the east side of 9th Street from the new driveway to tie into the existing sidewalk near Montgomery Street;
6) The Applicant shall obtain stormwater approval from Prince Georges County DPIE.
7) The Applicant shall work with the City of Laurel Police Department to mitigate parking issues that may result from the proposed project;
8) The Applicant shall install safety barriers around the proposed outdoor field to ensure that objects do not cross the field of play onto neighboring properties;
9) The Applicant shall submit a lighting plan to the Department of Economic and Community Development for review and approval, if lights are to be installed on the proposed outdoor field;
10) The Applicant shall comply with all applicable local, state, and federal laws and regulations in the development of the Property.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Site Plan
2. Elevation Plan
3. Statement of Justification

REVIEWED BY:

[Signature]

Robert Love, Acting Director